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# The Effect of *E-Commerce* on Social Networks and Consumer Dependence among University of North Sumatera (USU) Students

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to evaluate and study the impact of e-commerce on social networks and the level of dependency of USU students. This research involves surveys and data analysis from USU students who actively use e-commerce platforms. The results of this research show that e-commerce has a positive effect on expanding USU students' social networks, with increased social interaction through this platform. In addition, this research shows that USU students tend to become more dependent on e-commerce in the shopping process and interacting with available products and brands. Therefore, it is important to better understand the use of e-commerce by college students and its impact on social networks and consumer behaviour.

**Keywords:** E-Commerce, Consumer, Student

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi dan mengkaji dampak e-commerce terhadap jaringan sosial dan tingkat ketergantungan mahasiswa USU. Penelitian ini melibatkan survei dan analisis data dari mahasiswa USU yang menggunakan aktif platform e-commerce. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa e-commerce berpengaruh positif terhadap perluasan jejaring sosial mahasiswa USU, dengan peningkatan interaksi sosial melalui platform tersebut. Selain itu, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa USU cenderung menjadi lebih bergantung pada e-commerce dalam proses berbelanja dan berinteraksi dengan produk serta merek yang tersedia. Oleh karena itu, pentingnya pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang penggunaan e-commerce oleh mahasiswa dan dampaknya terhadap jaringan sosial serta perilaku konsumen.

**Kata Kunci:** *E-Commerce*, Konsumen, Mahasiswa.

## 1. Introduction

In the current era of the development of Science and Technology (IPTEK), everyone, especially the younger generation, is trying to be able to adapt to existing developments and changes. One concrete example of the development of Science and Technology today which is very widely used is online shopping platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, Lazada, Tiktoshop, Goshop, and so on.

In recent years, e-commerce or electronic commerce has experienced very significant growth and development throughout the world, especially among students. This is due to the advancement and development of Science and Technology, changes in consumer behavior, and easier access to the internet. E-commerce has changed the way people conduct economic activities such as buying and selling, interacting, and communicating with others.

University of North Sumatra (USU) students are one of the influential groups of young people in this digital era. They are part of the generation that grew up in the era of globalization and technology. Therefore, they have a higher level of access to e-commerce platforms. Students often utilize online shopping services to

fulfill their daily needs, ranging from purchasing daily necessities (food, skincare, stationery, clothing, etc.) to ordering services.

However, this growth in e-commerce also brings social consequences that we must understand and be aware of. There is a concern that there will be a dependency on the use of e-commerce that may impact students' social networks in their daily lives. When college students shop more online by utilizing the vast number of e-commerce platforms, does this reduce their social interactions in their daily lives? Does the use of e-commerce affect the way they interact with their friends, family and surroundings?

In addition, there are also concerns about USU students' dependence on e-commerce. In this context, dependence refers to the behavior of students who tend to rely heavily on the use of e-commerce platforms for shopping, even to the point of exceeding reasonable limits. This happens because the price of the goods or services offered tends to be cheaper on e-commerce platforms. In addition, we can more easily find the goods or services we want to buy and we can compare the prices of the same goods or services on several existing e-commerce platforms, so that we can get the cheapest price with quality that we can see through reviews or ratings given to the goods or services. Will USU students increasingly rely on e-commerce platforms to fulfill their needs? And if so, what impact will it have on their finances, health, and life?

Therefore, this research will discuss the effects of e-commerce on social networks and consumer dependence among USU students. This research will provide valuable insights to understand how e-commerce affects the social life and consumer behavior of USU students in this digital era. In addition, the results of this study are expected to provide useful information for decision-makers, including universities and parties involved in e-commerce, in an effort to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the benefits of e-commerce development for the younger generation, especially USU students.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Effect of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurial Intention**

Entrepreneurship development in young people has become a major focus in higher education in many countries. Entrepreneurship education not only provides practical skills in managing a business, but also instills the entrepreneurial mindset needed to start a business (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). According to Mwasalwiba (2010), an educational curriculum designed to increase entrepreneurial awareness can significantly increase entrepreneurial intentions among university students.

Some cases have shown that effective entrepreneurship education programs can change students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Jain and Mor (2005) found that students involved in entrepreneurship programs reported an increase in positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship compared to those who were not involved. Research by Rideout and Gray (2013) also shows that practical learning experiences, such as internships at start-ups, can increase entrepreneurial intentions. The importance of entrepreneurship education is also supported by research that shows a positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions. Luthje and Franke (2003) state that individuals who have received entrepreneurship education are more likely to start a business compared to those who have not. This is in line with the findings of Linan et al. (2008) who identified that entrepreneurial intentions can be predicted through entrepreneurship education.

However, although many researchers support the importance of entrepreneurship education, there are still challenges in its implementation. Selon et al. (2016) suggested that lack of resources and institutional support can be a barrier to the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education programs. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the factors that can improve entrepreneurship education programs to make them more effective in motivating entrepreneurial intention.

### **2.2 The Role of Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy in Entrepreneurial Intention**

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a concept that emerged from Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory and has been shown to be an important predictor of entrepreneurial intention. According to Zhao et al. (2005), individuals who have high self-efficacy tend to have greater confidence to face entrepreneurial challenges, thus increasing their intention to start a business. This study suggests that self-efficacy plays a mediating role between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention.

A study conducted by McGee et al. (2009), it was found that entrepreneurial self-efficacy has a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention among college students. This finding is supported by research by Chen et al. (1998), which states that individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to take

positive steps towards entrepreneurship. This suggests the importance of building self-efficacy in the context of entrepreneurship education. The literature also suggests that educational interventions can enhance entrepreneurial self-efficacy. For example, research by Nabi et al. (2010) showed that practical experiences, such as entrepreneurship competitions, can increase students' belief in their entrepreneurial abilities. In addition, research by Zopiatis and Krassou (2019) indicated that training designed to improve entrepreneurial skills can contribute not only to increased self-efficacy but also to entrepreneurial intentions.

However, there are few studies that specifically explore the relationship between entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention simultaneously. The research by Hsu et al. (2015) suggested the need for further studies to understand the mechanisms underlying this relationship and how best practices can be implemented in entrepreneurship education curriculum. Therefore, this study aims to further examine this relationship and provide recommendations that can be implemented in the entrepreneurship education curriculum.

### 3. Method

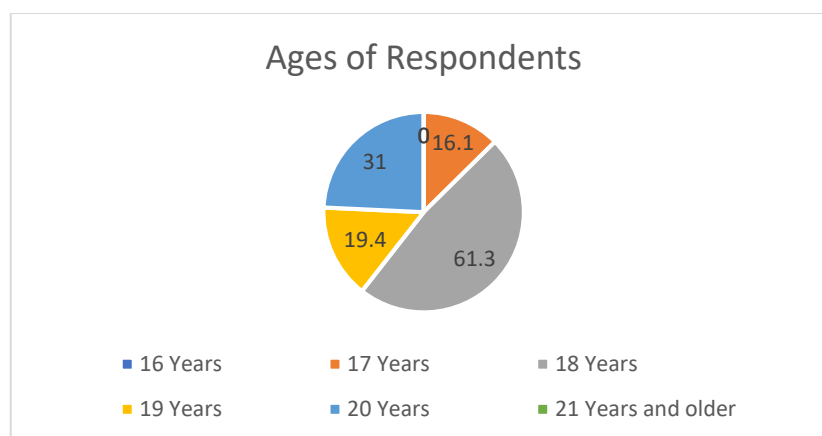
The research method used in this research is quantitative, namely in the form of data collection through filling out questionnaires. According to Sugiyono (2017: 142) a questionnaire is a data collection technique that is done by giving a set of questions or written statements to respondents to answer. The respondents of this research are students of the University of North Sumatra. The questions given are related to the influence of e-commerce on social networks and consumer dependence.

The types of questions in the questionnaire are divided into two, namely: open and closed. Open questions are questions that expect respondents to write the answer in the form of a description of something. Conversely closed questions are questions that expect a short answer or expect the respondent to choose one of the alternative answers from each of the available question that has been available. The type of question used this time is closed type. 4. Result and Discussion. It starts with the description of research finding. Then, data analysis of research finding becomes the next explanation. The data analysis is based on the research problem that has been presented in introduction. The descriptions in this section can explain whether the hypothesis which is presented in the introduction can be proven or not.

### 4. Result and Discussion

In this section, the research results of data collection that have been carried out through filling out questionnaires are presented with a comprehensive discussion. The questionnaire was distributed online using google form. The questionnaire was filled in by 31 (thirty-one) respondents, namely students of the University of North Sumatra as the object of research. Respondents are categorized by age and faculty of the respondent.

#### 4.1 Results Sub-Section



**Figure 1.** Age of Respondents

In the data collection results above, 61.3% (19 respondents) were 18 years old, 19.4% (6 respondents) were 19 years old, 16.1% (5 respondents) were 17 years old, and 3.1% (1 respondent) were 20 years old.

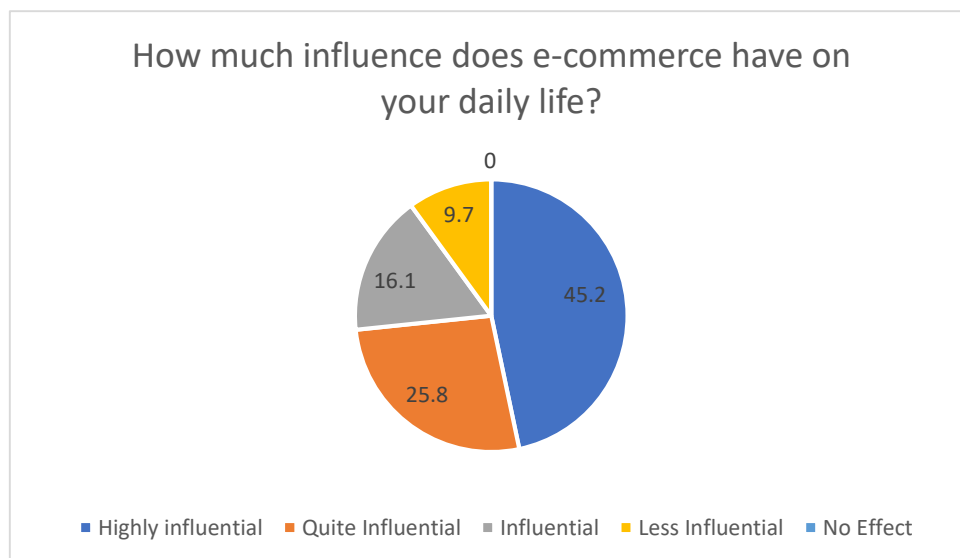
#### Fakultas

31 jawaban



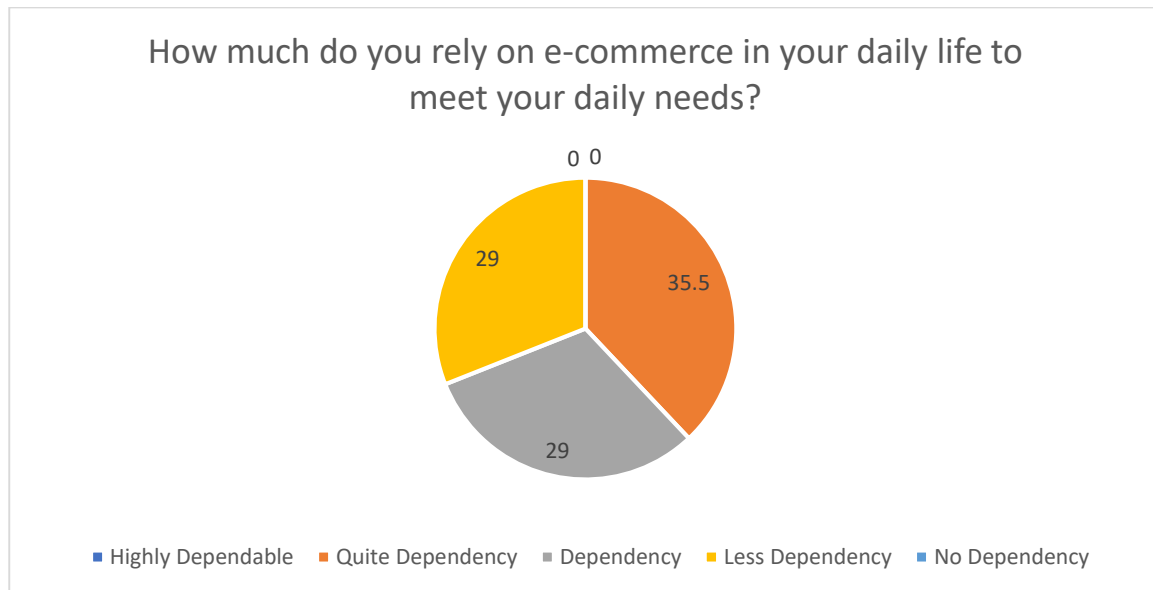
**Figure 2.** Faculty of Respondents

Based on the diagram above, 38.7% (12 respondents) came from the Faculty of Economics and Business, 16.1% (5 respondents) came from the Faculty of Agriculture, 9.7% (3 respondents) came from the Faculty of Psychology, 9.7% (3 respondents) came from the Faculty of Public Health, 9.7% (3 respondents) came from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, 3.1% (1 respondent) from Faculty of Humanities, 3.1% (1 respondent) from Faculty of Engineering, 3.1% (1 respondent) from Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, 3.1% (1 respondent) from Faculty of Pharmacy, and 3.1% (1 respondent) from Faculty of Nursing.



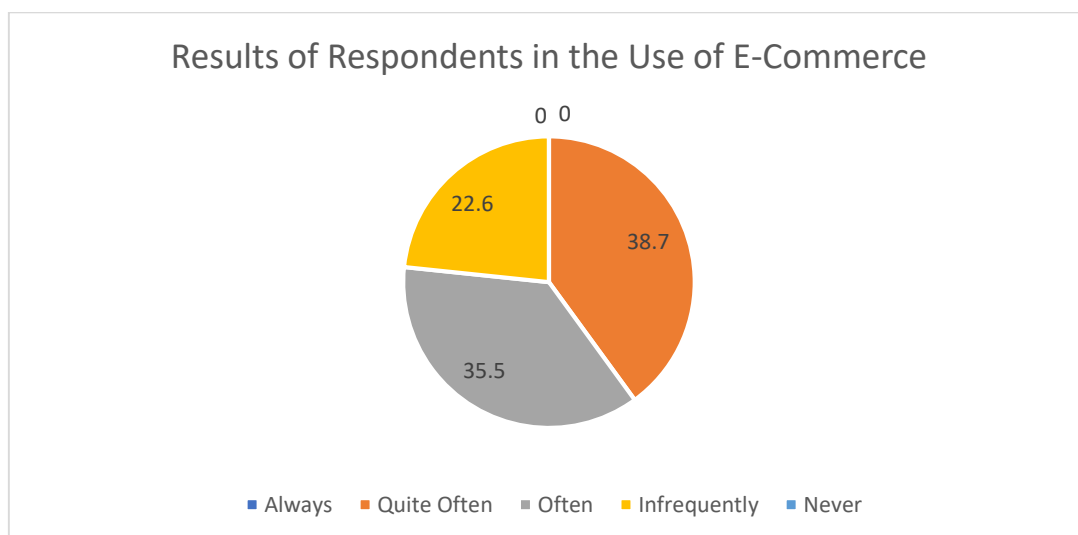
**Figure 3.** Survey Results of E-Commerce Influence on Respondents

The diagram above shows the survey results regarding the influence of e-commerce in the daily lives of the respondents. The result is as many as 45.2% (14 respondents) consider e-commerce very influential for their daily lives, 25.8% (8 respondents) feel the influence of e-commerce is sufficient in their daily lives, 16.1% (5 respondents) consider e-commerce influential for their daily lives, 9.7% (3 respondents) consider e-commerce less influential for their daily lives, and 3.2% (1 respondent) e-commerce has no effect on their daily lives.

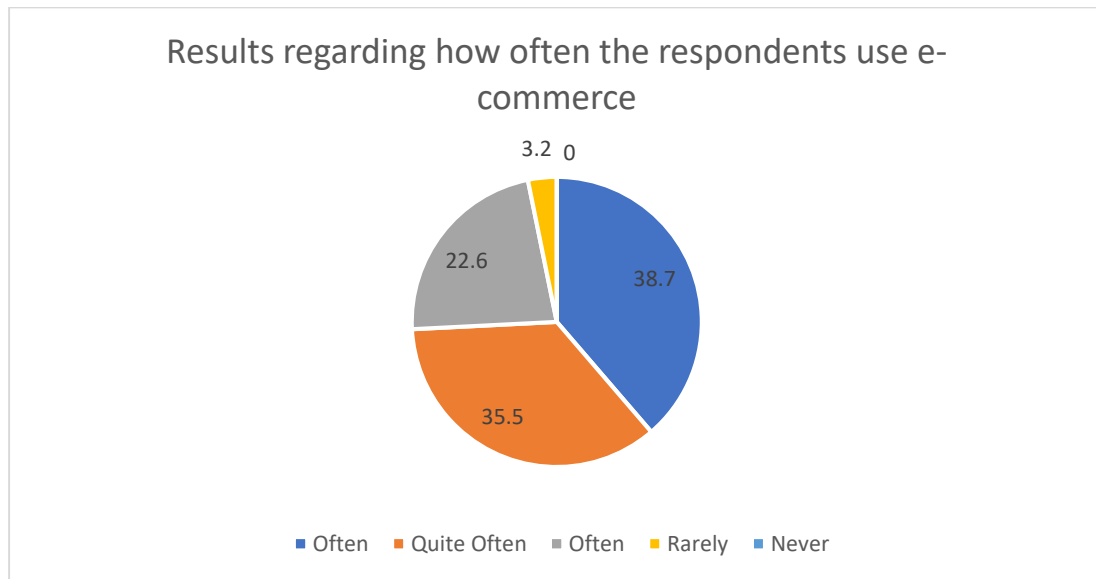


**Figure 4.** Survey Results of Respondents' Reliance on E-Commerce

Based on the results of the above survey regarding how much the respondents depend on e-commerce in their daily lives to fulfil their needs are as follows: 35.5% (11 respondents) answered that they were quite dependent on e-commerce, 29% (9 respondents) answered that they were dependent on e-commerce, 29% (9 respondents) answered that they were less dependent on e-commerce, and 6.5% (2 respondents) answered that they were not dependent on e-commerce.

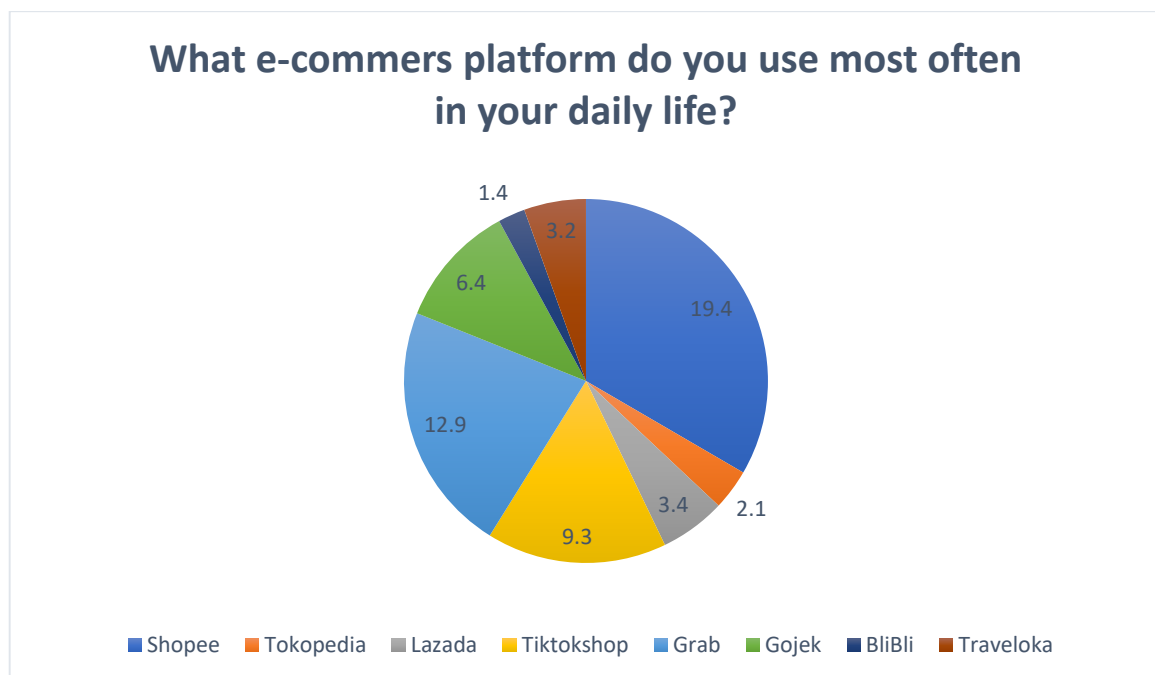


**Figure 5.** Survey Results of Respondents in the Use of E-Commerce



**Figure 6.** Survey Results of E-Commerce Platforms Frequently Used by Respondents

The survey Results regarding how often the respondents use e-commerce are as follows: 38.7% (12 respondents) use e-commerce quite often, 35.5% (11 respondents) often use e-commerce, 22.6% (7 respondents) rarely use e-commerce, 3.2% (1 respondent) never use e-commerce.



In accordance with the results of the survey conducted, 58.1% (18 respondents) more often use e-commerce, namely shopee, 19.4% (6 respondents), Tiktoshop 9,3%, more often use e-commerce, namely grab, 12.9% (4 respondents) gojek, 6.4% (2 respondents), Tokopedia 2,1% , Lazada 3,4%, BliBli 1,4% and 3.2% (1 respondent) Traveloka.



**Figure 7.** Survey Results How Respondents Shop

The survey results above show that 58.1% (18 respondents) prefer to shop online through e-commerce and 41.9% (13 respondents) prefer to shop directly such as visiting the store directly.

### 3.2 Results Sub-Section

The increased use of the internet has accelerated technological progress and information dissemination. Many facets of life are evolving resulting in new business concepts from the use of the internet. One example is e-commerce. Along with the evolution of information technology, conventional transactions have transformed into electronic transactions. According to (Basuki, 2019), understanding e-commerce is a person's ability to understand and understand that e-commerce is an alternative trading tool through an online electronic system which is then interpreted and understood by himself. And Romney in (Lovita & Susanty, 2021) argues that understanding e-commerce is a type of business mechanism carried out electronically which focuses on individual-based business transactions using internet networks (digital network-based technology) as an exchange of goods and or services across time and space constraints.

After conducting a survey of 31 respondents, the results were obtained regarding the effect of e-commerce on social networks and consumer dependence among students of the University of North Sumatra (USU). The results are as follows:

1. Based on the survey conducted using the first question, the results show that almost 50% of the respondents, who are students of the University of North Sumatra, feel the enormous influence of e-commerce in fulfilling their daily needs. This result reflects the high level of e-commerce adoption among Universitas Sumatera Utara students, who significantly rely on online platforms to fulfill their daily needs. It is important to note that the 50% figure shows that e-commerce has become an integral aspect of students' lifestyles, providing convenience in activities such as shopping for daily needs, finding references, and even obtaining learning materials digitally. The success of e-commerce in meeting students' needs reflects the role of digital technology in providing practical and efficient solutions in everyday life. The survey can also serve as a foundation to better understand the impact of e-commerce on the consumption patterns and spending habits of college students, as well as detail how online platforms have become an integral part of supporting the lifestyle of modern college students. This data can serve as a basis for improvement and customization of e-commerce services to better meet the needs and expectations of students in the future.
2. The survey involving the second question produced an interesting finding, namely that on average, respondents who are students of the University of North Sumatra have a sufficient level of dependence on the use of e-commerce to meet the needs in their daily lives. From this result, it can be concluded that e-commerce is not only a secondary option, but has become the main choice for students of the University of North Sumatra in fulfilling their various needs.

This phenomenon reflects a shift in consumptive behavior among students, where more of them choose to shop online compared to conventional methods. The ease of access, the variety of product choices, and the presence of attractive promos or discounts are the main factors that encourage this dependence. This

change in behavior can also be attributed to the evolving lifestyle, where convenience and efficiency are the determining factors in making purchasing decisions.

It is important to understand that reliance on e-commerce is not just a tendency, but can have further impacts on consumption patterns, social interactions, and how students manage their time and finances. Therefore, a deeper understanding of these dynamics is crucial in designing policies or services that support students' online shopping experience, while ensuring that this dependency does not negatively impact other aspects of their lives.

3. Based on the survey of the third question, the results show that respondents (students of the University of North Sumatra) often use e-commerce platforms as their lives progress. The results of this survey indicate sufficient dependence of respondents on the use of e-commerce platforms in their daily lives.

Moderate dependence on the use of e-commerce platforms in daily life indicates that students have adopted a digital lifestyle that utilizes the convenience and efficiency offered by these platforms. Shopping activities, information searches, and fulfilment of entertainment needs are all done online, reflecting the central role played by e-commerce in providing practical solutions for various purposes.

Of course, these changes also create new challenges related to students' time management, finances, and social interactions. Reliance on e-commerce requires a mature understanding of the sustainability of digital lifestyles, as well as efforts to maintain a balance between the virtual and real worlds. Therefore, further understanding of the psychological, social and economic impacts of reliance on e-commerce platforms is important to ensure that students can optimize the benefits without compromising important aspects of their lives.

4. Based on the survey of the fourth question, the results show that respondents (students of the University of North Sumatra) often use various e-commerce platforms to carry out online shopping activities. Various platforms including Shopee, Grab, Gojek, TikTokShop, and Tokopedia are the main choices of respondents in carrying out their online shopping activities.

The diversity of e-commerce platforms used by students reflects their diverse preferences in choosing where to shop. Shopee, as one of the leading platforms, may offer a variety of products at competitive prices, while Grab and Gojek are better known as fast and efficient delivery service providers. Meanwhile, the existence of TikTokShop marks the integration of social media in the world of e-commerce, where students can find products through video sharing platforms. Tokopedia, as one of the pioneering platforms in Indonesia, provides a complete shopping experience with various product categories.

With so many choices of e-commerce platforms used, it can be concluded that students of the University of North Sumatra have a high level of flexibility in choosing a place to shop online. The involvement of students in various platforms also shows that e-commerce has succeeded in bringing variety and innovation in providing a satisfying shopping experience, according to the needs and preferences of each user. A deep understanding of these preferences can provide valuable insights for e-commerce service providers to continuously improve the quality and diversity of the products and services they offer.

5. Based on the survey of the fifth question, the results show that more than 50% of respondents (students of the University of North Sumatra) tend to prefer shopping online. This is due to changes in the consumptive behavior of respondents from those who used to tend to shop directly to stores to now prefer shopping online. The advantages of shopping online (Juju & Maya, 2010) in the journal (Sari, 2011) : 27 are as follows:

- 1) Save costs, especially if the item you want to buy is only available outside the city.
- 2) Goods can be delivered directly to the house.
- 3) Payment is made by transfer, so the payment transaction will be more secure.
- 4) More competitive prices.

With these advantages, people prefer to shop online through e-commerce platforms

## **5. Conclusion**

Students' dependence on e-commerce is increasing along with the development of technology. They tend to prefer to shop online because of the ease of access, variety of product choices, and attractive promos and discounts. In addition, e-commerce also provides convenience for students in finding references and buying books or learning materials digitally. However, behind this convenience, it should be noted that this dependence can also pose new challenges, especially in managing students' personal finances. Uncontrolled use of e-commerce can trigger impulse purchases or invite students to overuse credit cards, thus requiring awareness of the importance of understanding and discipline in managing finances.



It is important for students to have a good understanding of financial management, such as making a rational budget and determining priorities. Thus, reliance on e-commerce can be carried out wisely without having a negative impact on their personal financial aspects. Along with the benefits that e-commerce offers, students need to maintain a balance between the convenience of online shopping and financial responsibility to ensure a positive and sustainable shopping experience.

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